

DGuzik 59 James

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(Jas 1:1)

Salutation

From James,¹ a slave² of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes dispersed abroad.³ Greetings!

(Guzik)

Jas 1:1-27

James 1 - A LIVING FAITH IN TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS

A. Trials and wisdom.

1. (Jam_1:1) Greetings from James.

James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.

a. **James**: There are several men named **James** mentioned in the New Testament, but reliable tradition assigns this book to the one called *James the Just* - the half-brother of Jesus (Mat_13:15), and brother of Jude (Jud_1:1), who led the church in Jerusalem (Act_15:13).

i. Other men named **James** include:

- James, brother of John and son of Zebedee, the first apostle martyred, also known as James the Less (Mat_10:2, Mar_15:40, Act_12:2).

- James the son of Alphaeus, another of the twelve disciples (Mat_10:3).

- James, the father of the “other” apostle Judas (Luk_6:16).

ii. An early history of the church says that James was such a man of prayer that his knees had large, thick calluses, making them look like the knees of a camel. It also says that James was martyred in Jerusalem by being pushed from a high point of the temple. Yet the fall did not kill him and on

the ground he was beaten to death as he prayed for his attackers.

b. A bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ:

Knowing that this James was the half-brother of Jesus makes his self-introduction all the more significant. He does not proclaim himself “the brother of Jesus”, but only **a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ**. Jesus was not only James’ brother; more importantly, Jesus was his **Lord**.

i. **Bondservant** is an important word. It translates the ancient Greek word *doulos*: “A slave, a bondservant, one who is in a permanent relation of servitude to another . . . Among the Greeks, with their strong sense of personal freedom, the term carried a degrading connotation.” (Hiebert)

ii. **Lord** is an important word. It translates the ancient Greek word *kurios*. It means that James considered Jesus *God*. “Hellenistic Jews used *Kurios* as a name for God; the non-use of the article gains in significance when it is remembered that *o Kurios*, ‘Dominus,’ was a title given to the early Roman Emperors in order to express their deity.”

(Oesterley in *Expositor’s*)

c. **To the twelve tribes**: What James means by the reference to **the twelve tribes** is difficult to understand. Is James writing a letter just to Christians from a Jewish background, or to all Christians? Certainly, this letter applies to all Christians. Probably, James wrote his letter before Gentiles were brought into the church, or before Gentile Christians emerged in any significant number.

i. **The twelve tribes** is a Jewish figure of speech that sometimes referred to the Jewish people as a whole (Mat_19:28; Act_26:7).

ii. **Which are scattered abroad**: At this time, the Jewish people were scattered all over the world. There were Christian communities among almost every Jewish community throughout the world. Regarding the extent of

the dispersion, Josephus wrote: "There is no city, no tribe, whether Greek or barbarian, in which Jewish law and Jewish customs have not taken root." (Cited in Barclay)

iii. Since this was written for the body of Christians as it existed at that time, this is a letter for us today. Some people have thought that the book of James isn't important for Christians, and some have quoted Martin Luther's famous estimation of James as "a letter full of straw." But Luther's remark should be understood in its context. His intention was to observe that there was little or nothing in James preaching the gospel of justification by faith alone. In another place he wrote of the book of James, "I think highly of the epistle of James, and regard it as valuable . . . It does not expound human doctrines, but lays much emphasis on God's law." (Cited in Barclay)

iv. Martin Luther knew and taught exactly what the book of James teaches. The following is from his preface to Romans regarding saving faith: *O it is a living, busy active mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good things incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done this, and is constantly doing them. Whoever does not do such works, however, is an unbeliever. He gropes and looks around for faith and good works, but knows neither what faith is nor what good works are. Yet he talks and talks, with many words, about faith and good works.* (cited in Moo)

v. In many ways, we listen to the book of James because it echoes the teaching of Jesus. There are at least fifteen allusions to the Sermon on the Mount in James. A man who knew the teaching of Jesus and took it seriously wrote this letter.

d. **Greetings:** The salutation **Greetings** was the customary Greek way of opening a letter. Paul never used it; he preferred to salute his readers with the words *grace and peace*. But here, James uses this more customary salutation.

2. (Jam_1:2-4) Patient endurance in trials.

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

a. **Count it all joy when you fall into various trials:** James regards trials as inevitable. He says **when**, not *if you fall into various trials*. At the same time, trials are occasions for **joy**, not discouraged resignation. We can **count it all joy** in the midst of trials, because they are used to produce **patience**.

i. **Patience** is the ancient Greek word *hupomone*. This word does not describe a passive waiting, but an *active endurance*. It isn't so much the quality that helps you sit quietly in the doctor's waiting room as it is the quality that helps you finish a marathon.

ii. The ancient Greek word *hupomone* comes from *hupo* (under) and *meno* (to stay, abide, remain). At its root, it means *to remain under*. It has the picture of someone under a heavy load and resolutely staying there instead of trying to escape. The philosopher Philo called *hupomone* "the queen of virtues." (Cited in Hiebert) The Greek commentator Oesterley said this word **patience** described "the frame of mind which endures."

b. **Knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience:** Faith is *tested* through trials, not *produced* by trials.

Trials reveal what faith we do have, not because God doesn't know how much faith we have, but to make our faith evident to ourselves and those around us.

i. If trials do not produce faith, what does? Rom_10:17 tells us: *So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*. Faith is built in us as we hear and understand and trust in God's word.

c. **Produces patience:** Trials don't produce faith, but when trials are received with faith, it **produces patience**. But **patience** is not inevitably produced in times of trial. If

difficulties are received in unbelief and grumbling, trials can produce bitterness and discouragement. This is why James exhorts us to **count it all joy**. Counting **it all joy** is faith's response to a time of trial.

i. "It is occasionally asserted that James asks his readers to *enjoy* their trials . . . He did not say that they must *feel* it all joy, or that trials *are* all joy." (Hiebert) d. **But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing**: The work of patient endurance comes slowly, and must be allowed to have full bloom. Patient endurance is a mark of the person who is **perfect and complete, lacking nothing**.

3. (Jam_1:5-8) How to receive the wisdom you need from God.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; *he is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

a. **If any of you lacks wisdom**: Trials are a necessary season to seek **wisdom** from God. We often didn't know we needed **wisdom** until our trial. Once in a time of trial, we need to know if a particular trial is something God wants us to eliminate by faith or persevere in by faith. This requires **wisdom**.

i. In trials, we need **wisdom** a lot more than we need *knowledge*. Knowledge is raw information, but **wisdom** knows how to use it. Someone has said that knowledge is the ability to take things apart, but wisdom is the ability to put things together.

b. **Let him ask of God**: To receive wisdom, we simply **ask of God** - who gives wisdom generously (**liberally**), and without despising our request (**without reproach**).

i. **Without reproach:** “This is added, lest any one should fear to come too often to God . . . for he is ready ever to add new blessings to former ones, without any end or limitation.” (Calvin) Knowing God’s generosity, that He never despises or resents us for asking for wisdom, should encourage us to ask Him often. We need to understand that He is the God of the open hand, not the god of the clenched fist.

ii. When we want wisdom, the place to begin is in the Bible. The place to end is in the Bible. True wisdom will always be consistent with God’s word.

c. **But let him ask in faith:** Our request for wisdom must be made like any other request - **in faith**, without doubting God’s ability or desire to give us His wisdom.

i. This shows the kind of heart we need in seeking God’s wisdom from the Scriptures: a heart that believes God’s word, and believes it speaks to us today.

d. **With no doubting . . . let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord:** The one who doubts and lacks faith should not expect to receive **anything from the Lord**. This lack of faith and trust in God also shows that we have no foundation, being **unstable in all our ways**.

e. **A double-minded man, unstable in all his ways:** To ask God, but to ask Him in a doubting way, shows that we are **double-minded**. If we had no faith, we would never ask at all. If we had no unbelief, we would have **no doubting**. To be in the middle ground between faith and unbelief is to be **double-minded**.

i. The man who came to Jesus and said *Lord, I believe; help my unbelief* (Mar_9:24) was not **double-minded**. He wanted to believe, and declared his belief. His faith was weak, but it wasn’t tinged with a **double-minded** doubt.

4. (Jam_1:9-11) Encouragement for those affected by trials. Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat

than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.

a. **Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation:** As much as it is appropriate for the **lowly** to rejoice when they are lifted up by God, so it is appropriate (but far more difficult) for the high (**the rich**) to rejoice when they are brought to **humiliation** by trials.

i. "As the poor brother forgets all his earthly poverty, so the rich brother forgets all his earthly riches. By faith in Christ the two are equals." (Hiebert, citing Lenski)

b. **Because as a flower of the field he will pass away:** Trials serve to remind the rich and the high that though they are comfortable in this life, it is still only this life, which fades as the grass grows brown and the flowers fade away.

i. In the land of Israel, there are a variety of beautiful flowers that spring to life when the rains come, but they last for only a short time before withering away. On the scale of eternity, this is how quickly **the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits.**

ii. The riches of this world will certainly **fade away** - but James says that the **rich man also will fade away**. If we put our life and our identity into things that **fade away**, we will **fade away** also. How much better to put our life and our identity into things that will never fade! If a man is only rich in this world, when he dies, he leaves his riches. But if a man is rich before God, when he dies he goes to his riches!

B. Living for the Lord in times of temptation.

1. (Jam_1:12) A blessing for those who endure temptation.

Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

a. **Blessed is the man:** This sounds like one of Jesus' Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). In those great statements of blessing, Jesus wasn't finished

telling us how we can be **blessed**. Here, we learn we can be **blessed** as we endure **temptation**.

b. **Who endures temptation: Temptation** is one of the *various trials* (Jam_1:2) we face. As we persevere through temptation, we are **approved**, and will be rewarded as the work of God in us is evident through our resistance of temptation.

c. **The crown of life which the Lord has promised** reminds us that it really is worth it to endure under the temptations we face. Our steadfastness will be rewarded as we demonstrate our love for Jesus (**to those who love Him**) by resisting temptation.

2. (Jam_1:13-16) How temptation comes.

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

a. **Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”** : Temptation does not come from God. Though He allows it, He Himself does not entice us to evil, though God may test our faith without a solicitation to evil (**nor does He Himself tempt anyone**).

i. James knew that most people have an evil tendency to blame God when they find themselves in trials. But by His very nature, God is *unable* to either be tempted (in the sense we are tempted, as James will explain), nor can **He Himself tempt anyone**.

ii. We should remember that the pagan gods of ancient times were well acquainted with evil, and sinned often themselves. But the true God, the God of the Bible **cannot be tempted by evil**.

b. **Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed**: God doesn't tempt us. Instead,

temptation comes when we are **drawn away** by our own fleshly **desires** and **enticed** - with the world and the devil providing the enticement.

i. Satan certainly tempts us. But the only reason temptation has a hook in us is because of our own fallen nature, which corrupts our God-given **desires**. We often give Satan too much credit for his tempting powers, and fail to recognize that we are **drawn away by our own desires**.

ii. Some who like to emphasize the sovereignty of God say that God is responsible for all things. But God is never responsible for man's sin damnation. "When Scripture ascribes blindness or hardness of heart to God, it does not assign to him the beginning of the blindness, nor does it make him the author of sin, so as to ascribe to him the blame." (Calvin) Calvin also wrote, "Scripture asserts that the reprobate are delivered up to depraved lusts; but is it because the Lord depraves or corrupts their hearts? By no means; for their hearts are subjected to depraved lusts, because they are already corrupt and vicious." God is never the responsible for the sin or damnation of any man.

c. **When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin:** Springing forth from corrupt **desire** is **sin**. Springing forth from **sin** is **death**. This progression to death is an inevitable result that Satan always tries to hide from us, but we should never be deceived about.

i. Satan's great strategy in temptation is to convince us that the pursuit of our corrupt desires will somehow produce life and goodness for us. If we remembered that Satan only comes *to steal, and to kill, and to destroy* (Joh_10:10), then we would resist the deceptions of temptation more easily.

3. (Jam_1:17-18) God's goodness stands in contrast to the temptations we face.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. Of His own will He brought us

forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

a. **Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above:** From our own fallen natures and from those who would entice us, we expect no true goodness. But **every good and every perfect gift** comes from God the Father in heaven.

i. Of course, the ultimate goodness of any gift must be measured on an eternal scale. Something that may seem to be only good (such as winning a lottery) may in fact be turned to our destruction.

b. **With whom there is no variation or shadow of turning:** God's goodness is constant. There is **no variation** with Him. Instead of shadows, God is **the Father of lights**. In the ancient Greek grammar, James actually wrote "**the Father of the lights**." The specific **lights** are the celestial bodies that light up the sky, both day and night. The sun, moon, and stars never "turn off," even when we can't see them. Even so, there is never a **shadow** with God.

i. This means that God never changes. Among modern theologians, there are some that are taken with something called *process theology*, which says that God is "maturing" and "growing" and "in process" Himself. But the Bible says that **there is no variation or shadow of turning** with God.

c. **Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures:** We can see God's goodness in our salvation, as He initiated our salvation **of His own will**, and **brought us forth** to spiritual life by His **word of truth**, that we might be to His glory as **firstfruits** of His harvest.

i. James may be speaking of his own generation of believers when he calls them **firstfruits**. Some have speculated on this even more, saying that James has in mind a wider redemption among unknown creatures of God, of which we are the **firstfruits** of that wider redemption.

4. (Jam_1:19-20) Standing firm against unrighteous anger.

So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

a. **Slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God:** In light of the nature of temptation and the goodness of God, we must take special care to be **slow to wrath**, because our wrath does not accomplish the **righteousness of God**. Our **wrath** almost always simply defends our own agenda.

b. **Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:** We can learn to be **slow to wrath** by first learning to be **swift to hear** and **slow to speak**. So much of our anger and wrath comes from being *self-centered* not *others-centered*. **Swift to hear** is a way to be *others-centered*. **Slow to speak** is a way to be *others-centered*.

5. (Jam_1:21) Standing firm against the lusts of the flesh.

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

a. **Filthiness and overflow of wickedness** probably has in mind an impure manner of living. In light of the nature of temptation and the goodness of God, we are to **lay aside all** impurity, putting them far from us.

b. **Receive with meekness the implanted word:** In contrast to an impure manner of living, we should **receive** (doing it **with meekness**, a teachable heart) **the implanted word** of God. This word is **able to save** us, both in our current situation and eternally. The purity of God's word will preserve us in an impure age.

6. (Jam_1:22-25) How to receive the word of God.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect

law of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

a. **But be doers of the word, and not hearers only:** We must receive God's word as **doers**, not merely **hearers**. To take comfort in the fact you have heard God's word when you haven't done it is to deceive yourself.

i. In the ancient world, it was common for people to hear a teacher. But if you followed the teacher and tried to live what he said, you were called a disciple of that teacher. Jesus is looking for disciples - doers, not just hearers.

ii. Jesus used this same point to conclude His great Sermon on the Mount. He said that the one who heard the word without doing it was like a man who built his house on the sand, but the one who heard God's word and did it was like a man whose house was built on a rock and could withstand the inevitable storms of life and eternity.

(Mat_7:24-27)

b. **He is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was:** The one who only hears God's word, without doing it, has the same sense and stability as a man who looks into a mirror and immediately forgets what he saw. The information he received did not do any good in his life.

i. **Observing his natural face:** The ancient Greek word translated **observing** has the idea of *a careful scrutiny*.

By application, James is referring to people give *a careful scrutiny* of God's word; they may be regarded as real Bible experts. But it still doesn't result in *doing*.

ii. A healthy person looks in the mirror to *do* something, not just to admire the image. Even so, a healthy Christian looks into God's word to *do* something about it, not just to store up facts that they won't use.

c. **But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it . . . this one will be blessed in**

what he does: But if we study the word of God intently, and do it (**continue in it**), then we will be **blessed**.

i. **He who looks into the perfect law of liberty:** In the ancient Greek language, the word for **looks into** speaks of a penetrating examination, so that a person will even bend over to get a better look. Though James stresses *doing*, he does not neglect *studying* God's word either. We should *look into* God's word.

ii. **The perfect law of liberty:** This is a wonderful way to describe the word of God. In the New Covenant, God reveals to us a **law**, but it is a **law of liberty**, written on our transformed hearts by the Spirit of God.

7. (Jam_1:26-27) Examples of what it means to be a doer of the word of God.

If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* useless.

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

a. **If anyone among you thinks he is religious:** Real religion is not shown by hearing the word, but by doing it. One way to do God's word is to **bridle** the **tongue**.

i. **Thinks he is religious:** In the ancient Greek language, **religious** is a word that is never used in a positive sense in the New Testament. James uses it here of someone who is **religious**, but not really right with God, and it is evident because he **does not bridle his tongue**.

b. **This one's religion is useless:** Your walk with God **is useless** if it does not translate into the way you live and the way you treat others. Many are deceived in their own heart regarding the reality of their walk with God.

c. **To visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world:** A real walk with God shows itself in simple, practical ways. It helps the needy, and keeps itself unstained by the world's corruption.

i. **Pure and undefiled religion before God:** There is a great deal of pure and undefiled religion *in the sight of man* that is not **pure and undefiled religion before God**.

d. **Unspotted from the world:** From the book of Genesis, Lot is an example of a man who was spotted by the world. He started living *towards* Sodom, disregarding the spiritual climate of the area because of the prosperity of the area.

Eventually he moved to the wicked city and became a part of the city's leadership. The end result was that Lot lost *everything* - and was saved as by the skin of his teeth.

(Jas 1:2) ***Joy in Trials***

My brothers and sisters,⁴ consider it nothing but joy⁵ when you fall into all sorts of trials,

(Jas 1:3) because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance.

(Jas 1:4) And let endurance have its perfect effect, so that you will be perfect and complete, not deficient in anything.

(Jas 1:5) But if anyone is deficient in wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without reprimand, and it will be given to him.

(Jas 1:6) But he must ask in faith without doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed around by the wind.

(Jas 1:7) For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord,

(Jas 1:8) since he is a double-minded individual,⁶ unstable in all his ways.

(Jas 1:9) Now the believer⁷ of humble means⁸ should take pride⁹ in his high position.¹⁰

(Jas 1:10) But the rich person's pride should be in his humiliation, because he will pass away like a wildflower in the meadow.¹¹

(Jas 1:11) For the sun rises with its heat and dries up the meadow; the petal of the flower falls off and its beauty is

lost forever.¹² So also the rich person in the midst of his pursuits will wither away.

(Jas 1:12) Happy is the one¹³ who endures testing, because when he has proven to be genuine, he will receive the crown of life that God¹⁴

promised to those who love him.

(Jas 1:13) Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted by evil,¹⁵ and he himself tempts no one.

(Jas 1:14) But each one is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires.

(Jas 1:15) Then when desire conceives, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is full grown, it gives birth to death.

(Jas 1:16) Do not be led astray, my dear brothers and sisters.¹⁶

(Jas 1:17) All generous giving and every perfect gift¹⁷ is from above, coming down¹⁸ from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or the slightest hint of change.¹⁹

(Jas 1:18) By his sovereign plan he gave us birth²⁰ through the message of truth, that we would be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

(Jas 1:19) ***Living Out the Message***

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters!²¹ Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.

(Jas 1:20) For human²² anger does not accomplish God's righteousness.²³

(Jas 1:21) So put away all filth and evil excess and humbly²⁴ welcome the message implanted within you, which is able to save your souls.

(Jas 1:22) But be sure you live out the message and do not merely listen to it and so deceive yourselves.

(Jas 1:23) For if someone merely listens to the message and does not live it out, he is like someone²⁵ who gazes at his own face²⁶ in a mirror.

(Jas 1:24) For he gazes at himself and then goes out and immediately forgets²⁷ what sort of person he was.

(Jas 1:25) But the one who peers into the perfect law of liberty and fixes his attention there,²⁸ and does not become a forgetful listener but one who lives it out — he²⁹ will be blessed in what he does.³⁰

(Jas 1:26) If someone thinks he is religious yet does not bridle his tongue, and so deceives his heart, his religion is futile.

(Jas 1:27) Pure and undefiled religion before³¹ God the Father³² is this: to care for orphans and widows in their misfortune and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

(Jas 2:1) ***Prejudice and the Law of Love***

My brothers and sisters,¹ do not show prejudice² if you possess faith³ in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.⁴

(Guzik)

Jas 2:1-26

James 2 - A LIVING FAITH IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

A. Partiality and discrimination in the family of God.

1. (Jam_2:1) The principle established.

My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord* of glory, with partiality.

a. The glorious **faith** we have, the **faith of our Lord Jesus Christ**, should never be associated **with partiality** (discrimination). The **Lord of glory** Himself shows no partiality (Deu_10:17, Act_10:34), so neither should those who put their trust in Him.

b. We do well to remember that James wrote to a very “partial” age, filled with prejudice and hatred based on class, ethnicity, nationality, and religious background. In the ancient world people were routinely and permanently categorized because they were Jew or Gentile, slave or free, rich or poor, Greek or barbarian, or whatever.

i. A significant aspect of the work of Jesus was to break down these walls that divided humanity, and to bring forth one

new race of mankind in Him (Eph_2:14-15).

c. The unity and openness of the early church was an astonishment to the ancient world. But this unity didn't come automatically. As this command from James shows, the apostles had to teach the early church to never **hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . with partiality.**

2. (Jam_2:2-4) An example of the kind of partiality that has no place among Christians.

For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

a. **If there should come into your assembly:** In the ancient Greek, the word **assembly** is literally *synagogue*, the name of the meeting place for Jews. The fact that James calls a *Christian* meeting place a *synagogue* shows that he wrote before Gentiles were widely received into the church. At the time James wrote, most all Christians came from a Jewish heritage. This is the only place in the New Testament where an **assembly** of Christians is clearly called a *synagogue*.

i. "Till the final rift between Judaism and Christianity both Christian and non-Christian Jews used, at least often, the same word for their sacred meeting-place." (Adamson)

b. **A man with gold rings:** This showed the man was rich. "In Roman society the wealthy wore rings on their left hand in great profusion. A sign of wealth, rings were worn with great ostentation.

There were even shops in Rome where rings could be rented for special occasions." (Hiebert)

c. **Have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?** To favor the

rich man over the **poor man** in the way James describes shows a deep carnality among Christians.

i. It shows that we care more for the outward appearance than we do upon the heart. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart (1Sa_16:7). God looks at the heart, and so should we.

ii. It shows that we misunderstand who is important and blessed in the sight of God. When we assume that the rich man is more important to God, or more blessed by God, we put too much value in material riches.

iii. It shows a selfish streak in us. Usually we favor the **rich man** over the **poor man** because we believe we can get more from the **rich man**. He can do favors for us that the **poor man** can't.

3. (Jam_2:5-7) Man's partiality rarely agrees with God's heart.

Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called?

a. **Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom:** Though it is easy for man to be partial to the rich, God isn't partial to them. In fact, since riches are an obstacle to the kingdom of God (Mat_19:24), there is a sense in which the poor of this world are specially blessed by God.

i. They are **chosen . . . to be rich in faith** because the **poor of this world** simply have more opportunities to trust God. Therefore they may be far more **rich in faith** than the rich man.

ii. They are **chosen . . . heirs of the kingdom**, because Jesus said that being rich made it *harder* to enter into the kingdom of heaven (Mat_19:24).

b. **Has not God chosen:** In the sense that the poor more readily respond to God in faith, having fewer obstacles to the kingdom, we can see how **God** has **chosen** the poor. "Church history demonstrates that comparatively more poor people than rich have responded to the gospel." (Hiebert)

i. When we choose people by what we can see on the surface, we miss the mind of God. Remember that Judas *appeared* to be much better leadership material than Peter.

ii. Of course, God has not *only* **chosen the poor**. But we may say that He has **chosen the poor** first, in the sense Paul speaks of in 1Co_1:26 : *For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.* Calvin also writes regarding God's choice of the poor: "Not indeed alone, but he wished to begin with them, that he might beat down the pride of the rich."

c. **Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts?** James reminds his readers that the rich often sin against them, often because the love of money is the root of kinds of evil (1Ti_6:10). For this reason alone, the rich are not worthy of the partiality often shown to them.

4. (Jam_2:8-9) Partiality is condemned by the Scriptures.

If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

a. **If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture:** James anticipates that some of his readers might defend their partiality to the rich as simply loving him as their neighbor in obedience to the law.

b. **If you show partiality, you commit sin:** The problem isn't that you are nice to the rich. The problem is that you **show partiality** to the rich, and are not nice to the poor man! So you can't excuse your **partiality** by saying, "I'm just fulfilling the command to love my neighbor as myself."

c. **The royal law:** Our God is a great King, and His law is a **royal law**. Our King Jesus put special emphasis on this command (Mat_22:36-40) from the Old Testament (Lev_19:18). James is reminding us that the poor man is just as much our **neighbor** as the rich man is.

5. (Jam_2:10-13) The serious matter of obeying all of God's commands.

For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one *point*, he is guilty of all. For He who said, "Do not commit adultery,"

also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

a. **Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all:** James here guards us against a selective obedience, the sort that will pick and choose which commands of God should be obeyed and which could be safely disregarded.

i. We can't say, "I like God's command against murder, so I'll keep that one. But I don't like His command against adultery, so I will disregard it." God cares about the **whole law**.

ii. The **whole law** must be kept if one will be justified by the law. One ancient Rabbi taught: "If a man perform all the commandments, save one, he is guilty of all and each; to break one precept is to defy God who commanded the whole." (Adamson)

b. **So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty:** We are under the **law of liberty**. It has **liberty**, yet it is still a **law** that must be obeyed and that we will be judged by at the judgment seat of Christ (2Co_5:10).

c. **For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy:** As those who **will be judged by the**

law of liberty, we should always show **mercy** to others by refraining from partiality. The mercy we show will be extended to us again on the day of judgment, and that **mercy triumphs over judgment**.

i. James is relating another principle of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount: *For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.* (Mat_7:2) B. The demonstration of a living faith in loving action.

1. (Jam_2:14) The principle established: true faith will be accompanied by action.

What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

a. **Someone says he has faith but does not have works**: James thinks it impossible that someone can genuinely have saving faith with no works. But someone can say **he has faith**, but fail to show forth good works. So, the question is valid: can *that kind* of **faith save him**?

b. James wrote to Christians from a Jewish background who discovered the glory of salvation by faith. They knew the exhilaration of freedom from works-righteousness. But they then went to the other extreme of thinking that **works** didn't matter at all.

c. James does not contradict Paul, who insisted that we are saved *not of works* (Eph_2:9). James merely clarifies for us the *kind of faith that saves*. We are saved by grace through faith, not by works; but saving faith will have works that accompany it. As the saying goes: *faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is not alone* - it has good works with it.

i. Paul also understood the necessity of works in proving the character of our faith. He wrote: *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them* (Eph_2:10). He also wrote: *This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good*

works. (Tit_3:8) ii. The great reformer and champion of salvation by grace through faith alone, John Calvin, understood James'

point: "But James has quite another thing in view, even to shew that he who professes that he has faith, must prove the reality of his faith by his works. Doubtless James did not mean to teach us here the ground on which our hope of salvation ought to rest; and it is this alone that Paul dwells upon." (Calvin)

2. (Jam_2:15-17) An example of dead faith.

If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

a. **If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food:** To fail in the most simple good work towards a brother or sister in need demonstrates that one does not have a living faith, and we can only be saved by a living faith in Jesus.

b. **Be warmed and filled:** To say this means you know that the person in front of you *needs* clothing and food. You know their need well, but offer nothing to help them except a few religious words.

c. **What does it profit?** Real faith, and the works that accompany it, are not made up of only "spiritual" things, but also of a concern for the most basic needs - such as the need for comfort, covering, and food. When needs arise, we should sometimes *pray* less, and simply *do more* to help the person in need. We can sometimes *pray* as a substitute for *action*.

d. **Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead:** This is the first time James speaks of a **dead** faith. Faith alone saves us, but it must be a *living faith*. We can tell if faith is *alive* by seeing if it is accompanied by **works**, and **if it does not have works, it is dead**.

i. A *living faith* is simply *real faith*. If we really believe something, we will follow through and act upon it. If we really put our trust and faith on Jesus, we will care for the **naked and destitute** as He told us to.

3. (Jam_2:18-19) A living faith cannot be separated from works.

But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe; and tremble!

a. **You have faith, and I have works:** Some might try to say that some have the “gift” of **works** and others have the “gift” of **faith**. “It’s fine for you to have your gift of **works** and that you care for the needy. But that isn’t my gift.” But James will have none of this kind of thinking. Real faith will be demonstrated by works.

b. **Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works:** The appeal of James is clear and logical. We can’t “see” someone’s faith, but we *can* see their works. You can’t see faith **without** works, but you can demonstrate the reality of faith **by** works.

c. **You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe; and tremble!** The fallacy of faith without works is demonstrated by the **demons**, who have a “dead” faith in God. The demons **believe** in the sense that they acknowledge that God exists. But this “faith” does nothing for the **demons**, because it isn’t real faith, proved by the fact that it doesn’t have works with it.

4. (Jam_2:20-24) Abraham as an example of living faith.

But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God.

You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

a. **Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?** Abraham was justified by faith long before he offered Isaac (Gen_15:6). But his obedience in offering Isaac *demonstrated* that he really did trust God.

b. **Faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect:** Faith and works cooperated perfectly together in Abraham. If he never had believed God, he could have never done the good work of obedience when asked to offer Isaac. As well, his faith was shown to be true - was completed, **was made perfect** - by his obedient works.

c. **You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only:** The **faith only** that will not justify a man is a faith that is without works, a dead faith. But true faith, living faith, shown to be true by good works, will alone justify.

i. "But James has quite another thing in view, even to shew that he who professes that he has faith, must prove the reality of his faith by his works. Doubtless James did not mean to teach us here the ground on which our hope of salvation ought to rest; and it is this alone that Paul dwells upon." (Calvin)

d. Works *must* accompany a genuine faith, because genuine faith is always connected with regeneration - being born again, becoming a *new creation* in Jesus (2Co_5:17). If there is no evidence of a new life, there was no genuine, saving faith.

i. As Charles Spurgeon is reported to have said: "The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul."

5. (Jam_2:25-26) Rahab as an example of living faith.

Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out

another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

a. **Was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works:**

Rahab demonstrated her trust in the God of Israel by hiding the spies and seeking salvation from their God (Jos_2:8-13). Her faith was shown to be living faith because it *did* something. Her belief in the God of Israel would not have saved her if she had not *done* something with that faith.

b. Significantly, James uses two examples of a living faith: Abraham (the father of the Jews) and Rahab (a Gentile). James perhaps is subtly rebuking the partiality that may have developed on the part of Jewish Christians against the Gentile believers starting to come into the church.

i. The lesson from Abraham is clear: if we believe in God, we will do what He tells us to do. The lesson from Rahab is also clear: if we believe in God, we will help His people, even at our own expense.

ii. "He designedly put together two persons so different in their character, in order more clearly to shew, that no one, whatever may have been his or her condition, nation, or class in society, has ever been counted righteous without good works." (Calvin, cited in Hiebert)

c. **For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also:** As much as you can have a body with no life (a corpse), so you can have a faith with no life - and faith without works is a **dead** faith, unable to save.

i. "Therefore, if no deeds are forthcoming, it is proof that the professed faith is dead. Notice that James does not deny that it is faith. He simply indicates that it is not the right kind of faith. It is not living faith, nor can it save."

(Burdick)

ii. "Man is not justified by faith alone, that is, by a bare and empty knowledge of God; he is justified by works, that is, his righteousness is known and proved by its fruits." (Calvin)

(Jas 2:2) For if someone⁵ comes into your assembly⁶ wearing a gold ring and fine clothing, and a poor person

enters in filthy clothes, (Jas 2:3) do you pay attention to the one who is finely dressed and say,⁷ "You sit here in a good place,"⁸ and to the poor person, "You stand over there," or "Sit on the floor"?⁹

(Jas 2:4) If so, have you not made distinctions¹⁰ among yourselves and become judges with evil motives?¹¹

(Jas 2:5) Listen, my dear brothers and sisters!¹² Did not God choose the poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him?

(Jas 2:6) But you have dishonored the poor!¹³ Are not the rich oppressing you and dragging you into the courts?

(Jas 2:7) Do they not blaspheme the good name of the one you belong to?¹⁴

(Jas 2:8) But if you fulfill the royal law as expressed in this scripture,¹⁵ " ***You shall love your neighbor as yourself,***"¹⁶ you are doing well.

(Jas 2:9) But if you show prejudice, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as violators.¹⁷

(Jas 2:10) For the one who obeys the whole law but fails¹⁸ in one point has become guilty of all of it.¹⁹

(Jas 2:11) For he who said, " ***Do not commit adultery,***"²⁰ also said, " ***Do not murder.***"²¹ Now if you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a violator of the law.

(Jas 2:12) Speak and act as those who will be judged by a law that gives freedom.²²

(Jas 2:13) For judgment is merciless for the one who has shown no mercy. But mercy triumphs over²³ judgment.

(Jas 2:14) ***Faith and Works Together***

What good is it, my brothers and sisters,²⁴ if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Can this kind of faith²⁵ save him?²⁶

(Jas 2:15) If a brother or sister²⁷ is poorly clothed and lacks daily food,

(Jas 2:16) and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm and eat well," but you do not give them what the body needs,²⁸ what good is it?

(Jas 2:17) So also faith, if it does not have works, is dead being by itself.

(Jas 2:18) But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works."²⁹ Show me your faith without works and I will show you faith by³⁰ my works.

(Jas 2:19) You believe that God is one; well and good.³¹ Even the demons believe that — and tremble with fear.³²

(Jas 2:20) But would you like evidence,³³ you empty fellow,³⁴ that faith without works is useless?³⁵

(Jas 2:21) Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

(Jas 2:22) You see that his faith was working together with his works and his faith was perfected by works.

(Jas 2:23) And the scripture was fulfilled that says, " ***Now Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness,***"³⁶ and *he was called God's friend.*³⁷

(Jas 2:24) You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

(Jas 2:25) And similarly, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another way?

(Jas 2:26) For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

(Jas 3:1) ***The Power of the Tongue***

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters,¹ because you know that we will be judged more strictly.²

(Guzik)

Jas 3:1-18

James 3 - TAMING THE WILD TONGUE

A. The demonstration of a living faith in controlling what we say.

1. (Jam_3:1-2) Opening observations: the greater accountability of teachers and the difficulty of not stumbling.

My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he *is* a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.

a. **Let not many of you become teachers:** James has a sober admonition for those who would **become teachers** in the church. They must take the responsibility seriously, because their accountability is greater, and they shall **receive a stricter judgment**.

i. It is easy to take the position of teacher lightly in the church, without considering its cost in terms of accountability. Jesus warned *to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much have been committed, of him they will ask the more.* (Luk_12:48)

ii. “The comparative adjective *greater* implies degrees of treatment at the judgment seat.” (Hiebert) c. **For we all stumble in many things:** The greater accountability of teachers is especially sobering in light of our common weaknesses. After all, **we all stumble in many things**. The ancient Greek word translated **stumble** does not imply a fatal fall, but something that trips us up and hinders our progress with the Lord.

i. **We all stumble:** James includes himself among those who **stumble**. But he does not excuse his or our stumbling. We know that **well all stumble**, but we should all press on to a better walk with the Lord, marked by *less* stumbling.

d. **If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man:** By this, James provides a measure of spiritual maturity for teachers and for all Christians. To **not stumble in word** shows true spiritual maturity. This is especially relevant to

teachers, who have so much more opportunity to sin with their tongue.

2. (Jam_3:3-6) The power of the tongue.

Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

a. **We put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us:** A strong horse can be controlled by its bit in its mouth. A large ship can be turned by a small rudder. Even so, if we have control over our tongue, it is an indication that we have control over our self. Whoever can control the tongue can *bridle the whole body* (Jam_3:2).

i. The bit and the rudder are small, but extremely important. If they are not controlled, the entire horse is out of control, and the entire ship is out of control. Something as small as the tongue can have tremendous power, for either good or evil.

ii. You don't solve the problem of an unruly horse by keeping in the barn, or the problem of a hard to steer ship by keeping it tied to the dock. In the same way, even a vow of silence is not the ultimate answer for the misuse of our tongue.

b. **See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity:** The fire of the tongue has been used to burn many. Children are told *sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me*. But that child's rhyme isn't really true. The bitter pain of a word spoken against us can hurt us for a lifetime, long after a broken bone has healed.

i. What others say to us and what we say to others can last a long time, for good or for evil. The casual sarcastic or critical remark can inflict a lasting injury on another person. The well-timed encouragement or compliment can inspire someone for the rest of their life.

ii. Proverbs speaks of the person who doesn't consider the destructive power of his words. *Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor, and says, "I was only joking!"*

(Pro_26:18-19)

c. James echoes the testimony of Proverbs regarding the tongue.

In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom.

(Pro_10:19-21)

Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad. (Pro_12:25) *Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones.*

(Pro_16:24) *Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.* (Pro_18:21)

3. (Jam_3:7-8) The difficulty of taming the tongue.

For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. *It is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

a. **Every kind of beast and bird . . . has been tamed by mankind:** A wild animal can be more easily tamed than the tongue. In fact, James tells us that **no man can tame the tongue.**

i. The human spirit has incredible capacity for sacrifice and self-control. Sometimes we hear a desperate survival story of someone who cuts off their own leg to get free from a tree that has fallen on them, then they drive to a hospital for

medical treatment. Yet that same man can't **tame the tongue** perfectly.

b. **No man can tame the tongue:** Yet it can be brought under the power and the control of the Holy Spirit. We might say that only God Himself is mightier than the human tongue!

c. **It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison:** The untamable tongue is even more dangerous when we consider the **deadly poison** it can deliver.

i. A woman came to John Wesley and said she knew what her talent was. "I think my talent from God is to speak my mind." Wesley replied, "I don't think God would mind if you buried that talent." Speaking forth everything that comes to mind is unwise, poisonous speech.

4. (Jam_3:9-12) The contradictory character of the tongue.

With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh *water* and bitter from the same opening? Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

a. **With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men:** The tongue can be used for the highest calling (to **bless our God**) and it can be used for the lowest evil (to **curse men**). But in those who are born again, it shouldn't be said that **out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing**.

b. **These things ought not to be so:** Our speech should be consistently glorifying to God. We shouldn't use one vocabulary or one tone of speaking at church, and a different one at home or on the job. Like a spring of water, our mouths shouldn't **send forth fresh . . . and bitter from the same opening**.

c. **Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh:** James points to the ultimate *impossibility* of such a

contradiction. If bad fruit and bitter water continue to come forth, it means that there is no contradiction. The tree is bad and the spring is bad.

i. Jesus taught in Mat_12:34-37 that a man's words are a reliable revelation of his inner character. What we say can indicate what we are.

B. The demonstration of a living faith in the presence of wisdom.

1. (Jam_3:13) Wisdom shows us how to do good works

Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom.

a. **Who is wise . . . Let him show by good conduct:** Wisdom is not mere head knowledge. Real wisdom and **understanding** will show in our lives, by our **good conduct**.

b. **His works are done in the meekness of wisdom:** True **wisdom** is also evident by its meek manner. Those who do their good works in a way designed to bring attention to themselves show they lack true wisdom.

2. (Jam_3:14-16) The character of earthly wisdom.

But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.

a. **Bitter envy and self-seeking:** These are the opposite of *the meekness of wisdom* mentioned in Jam_3:13.

b. **Do not boast and lie against the truth:** Anyone who shows **bitter envy and self-seeking** should not deceive anyone - especially themselves - about how "wise" they are. They show a **wisdom** that is **earthly, sensual, and demonic**. Their "wisdom" is more characteristic of the world, the flesh, and the devil than of God.

c. The fruit of this "wisdom" is plain: **confusion and every evil thing**. The wisdom of the world, the flesh, and the devil

may be able to accomplish things, but always with the ultimate fruit of **confusion and every evil thing**.

3. (Jam_3:17-18) The character of heavenly wisdom.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

a. **But the wisdom that is from above:** God's wisdom also has fruit. James here is defining exactly what he meant by *the meekness of wisdom* in Jam_3:13.

b. **First pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy:** The character of this wisdom is wonderful. It is full of love and a giving heart, consistent with the holiness of God.

c. **Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace:** This fruit is like a seed that will bear fruit as it is sown by **those who make peace**.

(Jas 3:2) For we all stumble³ in many ways. If someone does not stumble⁴ in what he says,⁵ he is a perfect individual,⁶ able to control the entire body as well.

(Jas 3:3) And if we put bits into the mouths of horses to get them to obey us, then we guide their entire bodies.⁷

(Jas 3:4) Look at ships too: Though they are so large and driven by harsh winds, they are steered by a tiny rudder wherever the pilot's inclination directs.

(Jas 3:5) So too the tongue is a small part of the body,⁸ yet it has great pretensions.⁹ Think¹⁰ how small a flame sets a huge forest ablaze.

(Jas 3:6) And the tongue is a fire! The tongue represents¹¹ the world of wrongdoing among the parts of our bodies. It¹² pollutes the entire body and sets fire to the course of human existence — and is set on fire by hell.¹³

(Jas 3:7) For every kind of animal, bird, reptile, and sea creature¹⁴ is subdued and has been subdued by humankind.¹⁵

(Jas 3:8) But no human being can subdue the tongue; it is a restless¹⁶ evil, full of deadly poison.

(Jas 3:9) With it we bless the Lord¹⁷ and Father, and with it we curse people¹⁸ made in God's image.

(Jas 3:10) From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. These things should not be so, my brothers and sisters.¹⁹

(Jas 3:11) A spring does not pour out fresh water and bitter water from the same opening, does it?

(Jas 3:12) Can a fig tree produce olives, my brothers and sisters,²⁰ or a vine produce figs? Neither can a salt water spring produce fresh water.

(Jas 3:13) ***True Wisdom***

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct he should show his works done in the gentleness that wisdom brings.²¹

(Jas 3:14) But if you have bitter jealousy and selfishness in your hearts, do not boast and tell lies against the truth.

(Jas 3:15) Such²² wisdom does not come²³ from above but is earthly, natural,²⁴ demonic.

(Jas 3:16) For where there is jealousy and selfishness, there is disorder and every evil practice.

(Jas 3:17) But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, accommodating,²⁵ full of mercy and good fruit,²⁶ impartial, and not hypocritical.²⁷

(Jas 3:18) And the fruit that consists of righteousness²⁸ is planted²⁹ in peace among³⁰ those who make peace.

(Jas 4:1) ***Passions and Pride***

Where do the conflicts and where¹ do the quarrels among you come from? Is it not from this,² from your passions that battle inside you?³

(Guzik)

Jas 4:1-17

James 4 - THE HUMBLE DEPENDENCE OF A TRUE FAITH

A. The humble character of a living faith.

1. (Jam_4:1-3) Reasons for strife in the Christian community. Where do wars and fights *come* from among you? Do *they* not *come* from your *desires for* pleasure that war in your members?

You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

a. **Where do wars and fights come from among you?**

James accurately describes strife among Christians with the terms **wars and fights**. Often, the battles that happen among Christians are bitter and severe.

b. **Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?** The source of **wars and fights** among Christians is always the same. There is some root of carnality, an internal **war** within the believer regarding the lusts of the flesh. No two believers, both walking in the Spirit of God towards each other, can live with **wars and fights** among themselves.

i. "James seems to be bothered more by the selfish spirit and bitterness of the quarrels than by the rights and wrongs of the various viewpoints." (Moo)

c. The types of **desires** that lead to conflict are described. *Covetousness* leads to conflict (**you lust and do not have**).

Anger and animosity lead to conflict (**murder**).

i. Again, James looks back to the Sermon on the Mount when he uses **murder** to express more than actual killing, but also as an inward condition of heart, shown outwardly by anger (Mat_5:21-22).

ii. "The word *kill* [**murder**] is startling and meant to startle; James sought to force his readers to realize the depth of the evil in their bitter hatred toward others." (Hiebert)

d. **Yet you do not have because you do not ask:** The reason these destructive desires exist among Christians is because

they are not seeking God for their needs (**you do not ask**). Or, when they do ask, they ask God with purely selfish motivation (**you ask amiss**).

i. **That you may spend it on your pleasures:** **Spend** is the same verb used to describe the wasteful spending of the Prodigal Son in Luk_15:14. Destructive desires persist, even if we pray, because our prayers may be self-centered and self-indulgent.

ii. We must remember that the purpose of prayer is not to persuade a reluctant God to do our bidding. The purpose of prayer is to align our will with His, and in partnership with Him, to ask Him to accomplish His will on this earth. (Mat_6:10)

2. (Jam_4:4-5) A rebuke of compromise and covetousness among Christians.

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously”?

a. **Adulterers and adulteresses:** This is a rebuke in Old Testament vocabulary. God spoke this way in the Old Testament when His people were attracted to some form of idolatry (Jer_3:8-9, Eze_6:9, Eze_16:32, Eze_23:37, and Hos_3:1). As James sees it here, their covetousness is idolatry (Col_3:5) and **friendship with the world**.

i. Better ancient Greek manuscripts only say *you adulteresses*. The addition of *adulterers* was probably made by an early scribe who thought James was speaking about literal sexual adultery and didn’t want men excluded from the rebuke. But in the picture James uses, *you adulteresses* fits well, because according to the picture, God is the “husband” and we are His “wife.”

b. **Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?** James recognizes that we *cannot* both be friends of this world system in rebellion against God, and

friends of God at the same time (Mat_6:24). Even the *desire* to be a friend (**wants to be a friend**) of the world makes one an **enemy of God**.

c. **The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously**: The indwelling presence of the Holy **Spirit** has a jealous yearning for our friendship with God. The Christian who lives in compromise can't help but be convicted by it.

d. **The Scripture says**: Why can't you find the exact words of the **Scripture** quoted in Jam_4:5 in any specific Old Testament verse? "More probably is the view that James was not citing a particular passage but summarizing the truth expressed in several Old Testament passages." (Hiebert)

i. Or, it may be that Jam_4:5 speaks in two independent sentences, and that the words of **Scripture** quoted refer to what was said in Jam_4:4.

3. (Jam_4:6-10) The solutions for strife: in humility, get right with God.

But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God.

Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and *your* joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

a. **But He gives more grace**: The same Holy Spirit convicting us of our compromise will also grant us the **grace** to serve God as we should. But this **grace** only comes **to the humble**.

i. **God resists the proud**: Grace and pride are eternal enemies. Pride demands that God bless me in light of my merits, whether real or imagined. But grace will not deal with me on the basis of anything in me, good or bad, but only on the basis of who God is.

ii. **But gives grace to the humble:** It isn't as if our humility *earns* the grace of God. Humility merely puts us in a position to receive the gift He freely **gives**.

b. **Therefore submit to God:** In light of the grace offered to the humble, there is only one thing to do: **submit to God**.

This means to order yourself under God, to surrender to Him as a conquering King, and start receiving the benefits of His reign.

c. **Resist the devil and he will flee from you:** To solve the problems of carnality and the strife it causes, we must also **resist the devil**. This means to stand against devil's deceptions and his efforts to intimidate. As we **resist the devil**, we are *promised* that **he will flee from you**.

i. Significantly, James does not recommend that demons should be cast out of believers by a third party. Instead, James simply challenges individual Christians to deal with Satan as a conquered foe who can and must be personally resisted.

ii. **Resist** comes from two Greek words: *stand* and *against*. James tells us to *stand against* the devil. Satan can be set running by the resistance of the lowliest believer who comes in the authority of what Jesus did on the cross.

d. **Draw near to God and He will draw near to you:** The call to **draw near to God** is both an invitation and a promise. It is no good to submit to God's authority and to resist the devil's attack and then fail to **draw near to God**. We have it as a promise: God **will draw near to** us as we draw near to Him.

i. If we are far from God, He hasn't distanced Himself from us. We have distanced ourselves from Him. An elderly couple drove down the road in their car with a front bench seat. As they drove, the wife noticed that in many of the other cars with couples in the front seat, the woman sat close to the man as he drove. She asked her husband, "Why is it that we don't sit that close anymore?" He simply answered, "It

wasn't me who moved." If we are far from God, He hasn't moved.

e. **Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep!** As we draw near to God, we will be convicted of our sin. So we **lament and mourn and weep** as appropriate under the conviction of sin, and we are compelled to find cleansing at the cross.

f. **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up:** As we come as sinners before holy God (not as self righteous religionists, as Jesus explained in Luk_18:10-14), we appropriately **humble** ourselves before God.

Then He will **lift** us **up**, because *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble*, and grace - the unmerited favor of God - always lifts us up.

4. (Jam_4:11-12) The solutions for strife: get right with other people.

Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

a. **Do not speak evil of one another:** Humbling ourselves and getting right with God *must* result in our getting right with other people. When we are right with other people, it will show in the way we talk about them. So we must **not speak evil of one another** and not judge our brother.

i. James rightly will guard us against the illusion that we might be right with God, yet evil towards our brother. As John says, *he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?*

(1Jn_4:20)

b. **He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law:** When we judge our brother, we put ourselves in the same

place as the law, in effect judging the law. This is something that we have no authority to do, because **there is one Lawgiver** - so **who are you to judge another?**

i. "However high and orthodox our view of God's law might be, a failure actually to do it says to the world that we do not *in fact* put much store by it." (Moo)

c. This is an extension of the same humility that James writes about in this chapter. When we have proper humility before God, it just isn't within us to arrogantly judge our brother.

B. A humble dependence on God.

1. (Jam_4:13-16) A caution against an attitude of independence from God.

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you *ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

a. **You who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"** : James rebukes the kind of heart that lives and makes its plans apart from a constant awareness of the sovereignty of God, and with an underestimation of our own limitations (**you do not know what will happen tomorrow**).

b. **For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away:** James asks us to consider the fragility of human life, and the fact that we live and move only at the permission of God. James will not discourage us from planning and doing, only from planning and doing apart from a reliance on God.

c. **Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."** It is nothing but sheer **arrogance** that makes us think that we can live and move

and have our being independent of God. This boastful **arrogance** is the essence of sin: a proud independence, the root of all sin, as was the case with Lucifer (Isa_14:12-15) and Adam (Gen_3:5-7).

2. (Jam_4:17) A challenge to live according to what we know in the Lord.

Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it*, to him it is sin.

a. **To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin:** James knows that it is far easier to *think about* and *talk about* humility and dependence on God than it is to live it. Yet he makes the mind of God plain: as we know these things, we are accountable to *do them*.

(Jas 4:2) You desire and you do not have; you murder and envy and you cannot obtain; you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask; (Jas 4:3) you ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, so you can spend it on your passions.

(Jas 4:4) Adulterers, do you not know that friendship with the world means hostility toward God?⁴ So whoever decides to be the world's friend makes himself God's enemy.

(Jas 4:5) Or do you think the scripture means nothing when it says,⁵ "The spirit that God⁶ caused⁷ to live within us has an envious yearning"?⁸

(Jas 4:6) But he gives greater grace. Therefore it says, " **God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.**"⁹

(Jas 4:7) So submit to God. But resist the devil and he will flee from you.

(Jas 4:8) Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and make your hearts pure, you double-minded.¹⁰

(Jas 4:9) Grieve, mourn,¹¹ and weep. Turn your laughter¹² into mourning and your joy into despair.

(Jas 4:10) Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.

(Jas 4:11) Do not speak against one another, brothers and sisters.¹³ He who speaks against a fellow believer¹⁴ or judges a fellow believer speaks against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but its judge.¹⁵

(Jas 4:12) But there is only one who is lawgiver and judge — the one who is able to save and destroy. On the other hand, who are you to judge your neighbor?¹⁶

(Jas 4:13) Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into this or that town¹⁷ and spend a year there and do business and make a profit."

(Jas 4:14) You¹⁸ do not know about tomorrow. What is your life like?¹⁹ For you are a puff of smoke²⁰ that appears for a short time and then vanishes.

(Jas 4:15) You ought to say instead,²¹ "If the Lord is willing, then we will live and do this or that."

(Jas 4:16) But as it is,²² you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

(Jas 4:17) So whoever knows what is good to do²³ and does not do it is guilty of sin.²⁴

(Jas 5:1) ***Warning to the Rich***

Come now, you rich! Weep and cry aloud¹ over the miseries that are coming on you.

(Guzik)

Jas 5:1-20

James 5 - HOW A LIVING FAITH LIVES

A. A rebuke of the ungodly rich.

1. (Jam_5:1-3) The rich and the illusion of wealth.

Come now, *you* rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon *you*! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.

a. **Come now, you rich:** James has developed the idea of the need for complete dependence on God. He now naturally rebukes those most likely to live independently from God: the **rich**.

b. **Weep and howl:** In the style of an Old Testament prophet, James tells the rich to mourn in consideration of their destiny (the **miseries that are coming upon you**). In the life to come, their riches will be revealed as **corrupted, moth-eaten** and **corroded**.

i. James probably refers to the destruction of three kinds of wealth. Stores of food are **corrupted** (rotted), **garments are moth-eaten**, and **gold and silver are corroded**. Each one of them comes to nothing in their own way.

c. **Will be a witness against you:** The corruptible nature of their riches will **witness against** them. On the day of judgment, it will be revealed that they have lived their lives in the arrogant independence James previously condemned, heaping up earthly **treasure in the last days**, when they should have been heaping up treasure in heaven (Luk_18:22).

2. (Jam_5:4-6) The sins of the rich are condemned.

Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you.

a. They have withheld **the wages of** their **laborers**. They have lived indulgently without regard for others (as the man in Jesus' story about the rich man and Lazarus, Luk_16:19-31). They have condemned and murdered from their position of power.

i. While Jesus counted some rich among His followers (such as Zaccheus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Barnabas), we are compelled to observe that riches do present an additional

(and significant) obstacle to the kingdom (Mat_19:23-24), and that the pursuit of riches is a motivation for every conceivable sin (1Ti_6:10).

b. The term **Lord of Sabaoth** in Jam_5:4 should not be confused with the term *Lord of the Sabbath*. It is a translation of the idea behind the Hebrew term *Lord of Hosts* (compare Rom_9:29 with Isa_1:9), which means “the Lord of armies,”

especially heavenly and angelic armies. It describes God as the warrior, the commander-in-chief of all heavenly armies.

c. **You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you:** Often, those who are poor and without power in this world have little recourse to justice. But their cries are heard by God, who guarantees, ultimately, to right every wrong and answer every injustice.

B. A call for patient endurance in light of the coming judgment.

1. (Jam_5:7-8) Imitate the patient endurance of the farmer.

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

a. **Therefore be patient, brethren:** James brought the issue of the ultimate judgment before us in his remarks about the ungodly rich and their destiny. Now he calls Christians (especially those enduring hardship) to patiently endure **until the coming of the Lord**.

b. **See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently:** A farmer does not give up when his crop does not come to harvest immediately. He keeps on working even when the crop cannot be seen at all. Even so Christians must work hard and exercise patient endurance even when the harvest day seems far away.

c. **Until it receives the early and latter rain:** The pictures of the **early and latter rain** should be taken

literally as James intends. He refers to the early rains (coming in late October or early November) which were essential to soften the ground for plowing, and to the latter rains (coming in late April or May) which were essential to the maturing of the crops shortly before harvest. There is no allegorical picture of an “early” and a “latter” outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church.

i. The Bible does explain that there will be a significant outpouring of the Holy Spirit in these last days (Joe_2:28-29, Act_2:17-18); but this passage from James doesn’t seem to be relevant to that outpouring.

d. **Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand:** The soon return of Jesus requires that we have *established* hearts, hearts that are rooted in Jesus and His eternal resolution of all things.

e. **For the coming of the Lord is at hand:** James said that in his day that **the coming of the Lord is at hand**. Was he wrong? No; we should not think as history since Jesus’ Ascension as moving towards a distant brink known as Jesus’

coming. Instead, it has run parallel to that brink for the last two thousand years or so, ready at any moment to head off it.

2. (Jam_5:9) Practicing patient endurance among God’s people.

Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

a. **Do not grumble against one another:** Times of hardship can cause us to be less than loving with our Christian brothers and sisters. James reminds us that we cannot become grumblers and complainers in our hardship - lest we **be condemned** even in our hardship.

b. **Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!** Jesus comes as a **Judge**, not only to judge the world, but also to assess the faithfulness of Christians (2Co_5:10). In light of

this, we cannot allow hardship to make us unloving towards each other.

3. (Jam_5:10-11) Following examples of patient endurance.

My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord; that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.

a. Take the prophets . . . as an example of suffering and patience: James reminds us that the prophets of the Old Testament endured hardship, yet practiced patient endurance. We can take them as examples.

i. Jeremiah stands out as someone who endured mistreatment with patience. He was put in the stocks (Jer_20:2), thrown into prison (Jer_32:2), and lowered into miry dungeon (Jer_28:6), yet he persisted in his ministry.

b. You have heard of the perseverance of Job: We are reminded of Job as an example of patient endurance. His story shows both the necessity of a constant trust through times of calamity, and God's compassionate and merciful resolution of seasons of hardship.

c. That the Lord is very compassionate and merciful: The compassion and mercy of God may seem far away in times of trial. But examples like Job encourage us to be those who, by our patient endurance, see the goodness of God in the land of the living (Psa_27:13-14).

4. (Jam_5:12) An exhortation in light of the coming judgment before Jesus.

But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes," be "Yes," and *your* "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.

a. Do not swear: The Jews of James' time made distinctions between "binding oaths" and "non-binding oaths." Oaths that did not include the name of God were considered non-binding, and to use such oaths was a way of "crossing your

fingers” behind your back when telling a lie. It is these kinds of oaths that James condemns.

i. The Bible does not forbid the swearing of all oaths, only against the swearing of deceptive, unwise, or flippant oaths. On occasion, God Himself swears oaths (Luk_1:73, Heb_3:11, Heb_6:13).

b. **Do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath:** James again echoes the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Mat_5:34-37). The need to swear or make oaths, beyond a simple and clear **yes** or **no** betrays the weakness of your word. It demonstrates that there is not enough weight in your own character to confirm your words.

c. **Lest you fall into judgment:** This lack of character will be exposed at the judgment seat of Christ. This motivates us all the more to prepare for that judgment by our speaking with integrity.

C. Exhortations for Christian care for one another.

1. (Jam_5:13-14) How to meet needs arising among Christians.

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

a. The **suffering** need to pray, the **cheerful** should **sing psalms** of praise to God, and the **sick** should call for the elders of the church, asking them to pray for their need.

i. James has the same advice for both the **suffering** one and the **cheerful** one: take it all to the Lord. In fact, the two commands could be reversed: sufferers should **sing** also, and the cheerful should also **pray**.

ii. James clearly puts the initiative on the person in need: **let him call**. The hesitancy of people to ask for or to seek prayer from the leadership of the church in such circumstances is a true mystery.

b. **Let them pray over him:** James also says that the **elders of the church**, as they pray, should anoint the sick person **with oil in the name of the Lord**. This **anointing with oil** has been interpreted as either seeking the best medical attention possible for the afflicted (oil massages were considered medicinal), or as an emblem of the Holy Spirit's presence and power.

i. **Anointing** the sick **with oil** is also mentioned in Mar_6:13. Luk_10:24 mentions the application of oil in a medicinal sense.

ii. The Roman Catholic Church mutated this command to anoint the sick into the "sacrament" of Extreme Unction, administered to someone to prepare them for death. Something James intended to heal was made into a preparation for death!

2. (Jam_5:15-16) God's answer to the prayers of His people. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

a. **And the prayer of faith will save the sick:** Many have wondered if James "guarantees" healing here for the sick who are prayed for in **faith**. Some have interpreted the idea behind **save the sick** as not specifically being healing, and **raise him up** as being a reference to ultimate resurrection. The reference to sins being **forgiven** adding to the idea that James is considering a spiritual work and healing, not necessarily a physical healing.

b. Yet, the context of the statement demands that James does not *exclude* physical healing as an answer to prayer, though he does seem to mean something broader than *only* a physical healing. We should pray for others in **faith**, expecting that God will heal them, then leave the matter in God's hands.

i. Clearly, God does not grant immediate healing for every **prayer of faith**, and the reasons are hidden in the heart and mind of God. Still, many are not healed simply because there is no **prayer of faith** offered. The best approach in praying for the sick is to pray with humble confidence that they will be healed, unless God clearly and powerfully makes it clear that this is not His will. Having prayed, we simply leave the matter to God.

ii. Often we do not pray the **prayer of faith** out of concern for God's reputation if there should be no healing. We should remember that God is big enough to handle His own reputation.

c. **Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed:** James reminds us that mutual confession and prayer brings healing, both physically and spiritually. These free us from the heavy burdens (physically and spiritually) of unresolved sin, and removes hindrances to the work of the Holy Spirit.

i. **To one another:** Confession to another in the body of Christ is essential, because sin will demand to have us to itself, isolated from all others. Confession breaks the power of secret sin. Yet, confession need not be made to a "priest" or any imagined mediator; we simply confess **to one another** as appropriate. Confession is good, but must be made with discretion. An unwise confession of sin can be the cause of more sin.

ii. Sin should especially be confessed where physical healing is necessary. It is possible - though by no means always the case - that a person's sickness is the direct result of some sin that has not been dealt with, as Paul describes in 1Co_11:30.

iii. Hiebert on **confess**: "The root form means literally *to say the same thing*; hence, it means that in confession sin we agree to identify it by its true name and admit that it is sin."

iv. The one who hears the confession should have the proper response: loving, intercessory prayer, and not human

wisdom, gossiping, or “sharing” the need with others.

d. **The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much:** In writing about the need for prayer for the suffering, for the sick, and for the sinning, James points to the **effective** nature of prayer - when it is **fervent** and offered by a **righteous man**.

i. Much of our prayer is not effective simply because it is not **fervent**. It is offered with a lukewarm attitude that virtually asks God to care about something that we care little about. Effective prayer must be **fervent**, not because we must emotionally persuade a reluctant God, but because we must gain God’s heart by being **fervent** for the things He is **fervent** for.

ii. Additionally, effective prayer is offered by a **righteous man**. This is someone one who recognizes the grounds of his righteousness reside in Jesus, and whose personal walk is generally consistent with the righteousness that he has in Jesus.

3. (Jam_5:17-18) Elijah as an example of answered prayer.

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

a. **Elijah was a man with a nature like ours:** Elijah is a model of earnest prayer that was answered by God. His effectiveness in prayer extended even to the weather! Yet, this shows that Elijah’s heart was in tune with God’s. He prayed for the rain to stop and start only because he sensed it was in the heart of God in His dealings with Israel.

b. **Prayed earnestly** is literally *prayed with prayer*. To truly pray, by definition, is to pray **earnestly**.

c. If **Elijah was a man with a nature like ours**, then we can be men with the power of prayer like him.

4. (Jam_5:19-20) Helping a sinning brother.

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a

sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

a. **If anyone among you wanders from the truth:**

Having introduced the topics of sin and confession, James reminds us of the need to confront those who have wandered from the truth. **Wanders from the truth** is a good picture. Most people don't wander deliberately - it just sort of happens. Nonetheless, it still gets them off track and possibly in danger.

b. **He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins:** There is a blessing for the one who loves his brother enough to confront him, and who turns him from **the error of his way**. He has saved that **soul from death** and covered **a multitude of sins**.

c. James concludes with this because this is exactly what he has endeavored to do through this challenging letter - to confront those who have wandered from a living faith, endeavoring to save their souls from death, by demanding that they not only hear the word, but do it, because a living faith will have its proof.

(Jas 5:2) Your riches have rotted and your clothing has become moth-eaten.

(Jas 5:3) Your gold and silver have rusted and their rust will be a witness against you. It will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have hoarded treasure!²

(Jas 5:4) Look, the pay you have held back from the workers who mowed your fields cries out against you, and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

(Jas 5:5) You have lived indulgently and luxuriously on the earth. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.³

(Jas 5:6) You have condemned and murdered the righteous person, although he does not resist you.⁴

(Jas 5:7) ***Patience in Suffering***

So be patient, brothers and sisters,⁵ until the Lord's return.⁶ Think of how the farmer waits⁷ for the precious fruit of the ground and is patient⁸ for it until it receives the early and late rains.

(Jas 5:8) You also be patient and strengthen your hearts, for the Lord's return is near.

(Jas 5:9) Do not grumble against one another, brothers and sisters,⁹ so that you may not be judged. See, the judge stands before the gates!¹⁰

(Jas 5:10) As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters,¹¹ take the prophets who spoke in the Lord's name.

(Jas 5:11) Think of how we regard¹² as blessed those who have endured. You have heard of Job's endurance and you have seen the Lord's purpose, that *the Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*¹³

(Jas 5:12) And above all, my brothers and sisters,¹⁴ do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath. But let your "Yes" be yes and your "No" be no, so that you may not fall into judgment.

(Jas 5:13) ***Prayer for the Sick***

Is anyone among you suffering? He should pray. Is anyone in good spirits? He should sing praises.

(Jas 5:14) Is anyone among you ill? He should summon the elders of the church, and they should pray for him and anoint¹⁵ him with oil in the name of the Lord.

(Jas 5:15) And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick and the Lord will raise him up — and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.¹⁶

(Jas 5:16) So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness.¹⁷

(Jas 5:17) Elijah was a human being¹⁸ like us, and he prayed earnestly¹⁹ that it would not rain and there was no rain on the land for three years and six months!

(Jas 5:18) Then²⁰ he prayed again, and the sky gave rain and the land sprouted with a harvest.

(Jas 5:19) My brothers and sisters,²¹ if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, (Jas 5:20) he should know that the one who turns a sinner back from his wandering path²² will save that person's²³ soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.